

REEF FISH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO AMENDMENT 38

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS JANUARY 2013

What changes to reef fish management are in Amendment 38?

- Post-season accountability measures for shallow-water grouper are modified.
- The triggering method for accountability measures is changed.
- The framework procedure is revised.

What are shallow-water grouper?

- Gag and red grouper are shallow-water grouper species that have individual catch limits.
- Other shallow-water grouper include black grouper, scamp, yellowfin grouper, and yellowmouth grouper. These species are grouped into a complex with a catch limit for the complex.

What are accountability measures?

- Accountability measures help keep landings within the catch limits or catch targets.
- Accountability measures may also impose management measures if those levels are exceeded.
- In-season accountability measures are implemented during the same season the catch limit or catch target is reached or projected to be reached, such as an in-season closure.
- Post-season accountability measures are implemented in the following season if the catch limit or catch target is exceeded, such as shortening the season the next year.

Why do accountability measures and the triggering method need to be changed?

- Previously, if recreational landings exceeded the catch limit for gag or red grouper in a year, the recreational season for all shallow-water groupers was shortened the following year. This rule modifies the accountability measure to shorten the season only for the stock which has landings exceeding the catch limit, avoiding unnecessary closures for other shallow-water grouper.
- The previous method for triggering accountability measures used a three-year moving average of recreational catches compared to the annual catch limit. However, the use of a moving average was not practical due to frequent changes in the gag annual catch limit. This rule changes the trigger method to one that compares one year of landings to the annual catch limit.

What is a framework?

- The framework procedure provides a guideline for implementing routine actions more quickly than developing an amendment to the fishery management plan.
- The framework procedure describes what specific actions can be implemented under the framework and the methods for developing those actions.

What specific changes are made to the framework through Amendment 38?

- This rule allows changes to accountability measures through the framework procedure, which should result in faster implementation of these measures. Previously, a change to accountability measures required an amendment to the fishery management plan.
- The rule also adds general language to replace specific references that are no longer accurate.